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SUBJECT: UNAMID DARFUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT DELAYED

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. UNAMID Acting Human Rights Chief Joanna Oyediran told FieldOff June 24 that the first UNAMID human rights report, which was due to be published in July, had been delayed until September. The human rights office was "taking a bit more time to work out content" for the report, but said that it would be heavily focused on accountability and "procedural" issues rather than a catalogue or narrative of abuses. Oyediran noted that such issues were timely in light of the establishment of special courts in Khartoum to deal with alleged collaborators in the May 10 attack on Omdurman, and concerns about due process and fair trials for the accused. Her focus on Sudanese procedures rather than substance, and her attempts to highlight Government of Sudan (GoS) progress on issues relating to violence against women, may signify that the report will contain carefully crafted positive spin on a situation that most international and local observers agree is not measurably improving. END SUMMARY.

Omdurman Attack Raises HR Concerns

¶2. (SBU) UNAMID Acting Human Rights Chief Joanna Oyediran, who is the Human Rights team leader for Sector West, told FieldOff that the first bi-annual human rights report would be delayed from July until September. She noted that UNAMID was taking some time "to work out content," but that the report would largely focus on accountability for human rights abuses, and government procedures for processing allegations of abuses. She noted that these issues were particularly pressing in the wake of the May 10 attack on Omdurman, which had resulted in a wave of detentions and the establishment of three special courts in Khartoum to prosecute alleged collaborators.

¶3. (SBU) Although most arrests following the Omdurman attack were concentrated in Khartoum, there had been a handful of arrests in Darfur as well. In West Darfur, 13 individuals from both the Zaghawa and Massalit tribes have been arrested in connection with the attack, including a deputy Umda and a prominent local attorney. In North Darfur, Oyediran was only aware of one or two arrests, neither of which had resulted in charges. In South Darfur, she reported, 24 or 25 individuals had been detained, and one 47 year old detainee died while in custody in Nyala on or around June 10. While initial reports suggested foul play, she noted that UNAMID had not yet been able to access the results of the autopsy to determine the cause of death.

¶4. (SBU) Oyediran said that most of the arrests in Darfur had not taken place immediately following the Omdurman attack, which she believed indicated that the GoS arrested suspects based on a previously-existing "hit list" of individuals to be detained. "Most certainly there are individuals in Darfur who were involved in planning and equipping the rebels who attacked the capital," she stated, "however the lack of due diligence in producing evidence and conducting investigations raises serious questions about the potential for a fair trial for these detainees." Oyediran said that

UNAMID had been granted access by the GoS to detainees in West Darfur, but was denied access to those in custody in South Darfur. Therefore the UNAMID human rights report will address the issues of access to detainees by families and human rights monitors and due process procedures, said Oyediran.

GoS Making Progress on Violence Against Women...

¶5. (SBU) Apart from the arrest and due process issues, Oyediran pointed out that there had also been some "good news stories" on human rights in Darfur over the past months. For example, in West Darfur the State Committee to Eliminate Violence Against Women had recently begun meeting. Established in 2006, the committee had not met until the new Minister of Social Welfare took the helm in April ¶2008. Since then, the committee had met several times, with UNAMID representatives attending as observers. Oyediran admitted that the committee's focus, currently limited to advocacy on individual cases, was both narrow and misguided, but noted that "the tone of the dialogue is encouraging in a way that we didn't expect only a few months ago."

Comment

¶6. (SBU) Oyediran's description of the contents of the upcoming human rights report represents a significant departure from previous accounts. UNAMID Human Rights Chief Marie Therese Keita previously told FieldOff that the report would feature a detailed account of human rights abuses and trends based on investigations and

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interviews with victims. Furthermore, the Human Rights Office's upbeat assessment of GoS progress on addressing violence against women was particularly baffling, considering statements made on June 19, when the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 calling for the complete halt to acts of sexual violence against civilians in combat zones by unanimous vote. Speaking in support of the resolution, delegates repeatedly deplored the situation in Darfur and called on the GoS to stop the use of rape as a weapon of war. Once again, some international observers seem to be mistaking process over results as a measure of progress in Sudan.

¶7. (SBU) UNAMID's delay in releasing the report in order to finalize content, together with its focus on Sudanese procedural issues rather than substance, suggests that it is not yet ready to confront the GoS on the abuses continuing in Darfur. The attempt to find a "good news story" in an area that was just condemned by the Security Council also undermines UNAMID's credibility. There are few human rights monitoring organizations operating in Darfur, and those who do must walk a fine line in order to continue their work on the ground. UNAMID is unique in that it has a legal right to operate in Darfur, and should start exercising it.

FERNANDEZ